

# *Protecting the Vulnerable*

*Remarks on Palliative Care*

*April 12, 2018*

Archbishop Christophe Pierre

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My dear friends, allow me to say just a few words. As the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Holy Father to the United States, allow me to express the warm greetings and paternal affection of the Holy Father and to offer you encouragement in this vital apostolate. I am very happy to be with you this evening to help introduce you to the National Catholic Bioethics Center, having seen first-hand its important role in addressing the pressing bioethical issues of our day.

The Center is of great service to the Church in the United States, offering workshops for bishops; providing ethical consultation and advice to bishops, priests and healthcare providers; faithfully articulating and exploring Church teaching in its publications like *Ethics and Medics* and *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*; and in its defense and promotion of human life. The Center is also a great service to the universal Church, with its President, Dr. John Haas, serving as a consultant to various dicasteries, including the Pontifical Academy for Life.

I am looking forward to the brief presentations tonight to learn more about how the Catholic moral tradition offers guidance for providing care for those who are ill and suffering. In his recent apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate* (March 19, 2018), Pope Francis writes,

Our defense of the innocent unborn . . . needs to be clear, firm, and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to euthanasia . . . and every form of rejection. We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with

abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty. (n. 101)

I want to highlight that the Holy Father specifically mentions *the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to euthanasia*. Providing effective care for the ill and suffering and accompanying them in times of illness and at the end of life helps witness to the dignity of the human person and can “ignite the spark that connects the experience of the loving sharing of human life, up to its mysterious end, with the evangelical proclamation that sees us all as children of the same Father and recognizes in each one His inviolable image.”<sup>1</sup>

I am grateful for the efforts of The National Catholic Bioethics Center to ignite that spark! Thank you.

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1. Letter of Cardinal Pietro Parolin to Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia on the occasion of the opening of the International Congress on Palliative Care, February 28, 2018.